DUKE OF EDINBURGH ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:

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Date:

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DUKE OF EDINBURGH ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

Primary Role

The **primary** role of the Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve is to protect the largest seabird nesting colony in the Queen Charlotte Strait. This ecological reserve, off the northern end of Vancouver Island, includes some 20 small islands and their surrounding shallows down to the 20 fathom depth contour. These islands and associated reefs are scattered over an area of approximately 6 km by 14 km. Seabird nesting colonies are the most significant features of the ecological reserve with the islands supporting over 483,000 pairs of breeding seabirds. In the ecological reserve, Leach's storm petrels, rhinoceros auklets and fork-tailed storm petrels reach by far the largest breeding concentration anywhere in the province. An estimated 161,600 rhinoceros auklet pairs nest here in burrows excavated in the surface soil. This represents approximately 26% of the global population and as much as 45% of the national population. Other nesting seabirds are (in decreasing numbers) glaucous-winged gulls, pigeon guillemots, black oyster-catchers, and pelagic cormorants. About 10 pairs of bald eagles are presumed to nest in the ecological reserve.

Secondary Role

The **secondary** role is to protect representative examples of British Columbia's ecosystems. The Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve contributes 11% of the overall protected area representation of the Queen Charlotte Strait *Terrestrial* Ecosection (QCT) which is under-represented in the protected areas system at 3.8%. With 535 hectares of foreshore, it also contributes 7% to the protection of the under-represented Queen Charlotte Strait *Marine* Ecosection (QCT), which has only 3.30% protected provincially. For both ecosections, Duke of Edinburgh makes the third largest contribution (out of only 4 protected areas) to their representation.

The Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve protects marine habitat for a variety of species, including numerous rare and endangered wildlife. The marine waters surrounding the islands have an abundance of plankton and nutrient-rich upwellings and several canopy kelp beds. These areas serve as habitat for salmon, groundfish, migrating water birds, sei whales, and harbour seals. They are also good potential habitat for other marine mammals such as gray whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall's porpoises and harbour porpoises.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Commercial fishing of salmon and groundfish occurs in the ecological reserve – intensity of use is high	➢ Assess impacts and work with DFO on their rockfish management strategy to ensure impacts are mitigated.
Lack of knowledge and awareness of	➢ Undertake cultural inventory of ecological reserve in

cultural and natural values	conjunction with First Nations. ➢ Complete inventory of natural values, with particular focus on seabirds and species habitat at risk.
Lack of awareness of the ecological reserve by fishermen and boaters	➢ In conjunction with First Nations, develop interpretative program offsite. ➢ Enhance relations with DFO, CWS, Coast Guard, Royal BC Museum, and volunteer warden to determine the level and type of use of the ecological reserve. ➢ Encourage more formal monitoring and reporting system with lighthouse keeper.
Absence of a volunteer ecological reserve warden	➢ Recruit ecological reserve warden

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve contributes 11% to the protection of the under-represented Queen Charlotte Strait *Terrestrial* Ecosection (QCT), which has only 3.8% protected in total. Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve is one of 5 small protected areas contributing to the representation of this ecosection. It also contributes 7% to the protection of the under-represented Queen Charlotte Strait *Marine* Ecosection (QCT), which has only 3.30% protected.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve makes a minimal contribution (0.11%) to CWHvh1, which is adequately protected at 19.3%.
Special Features	☒	Nesting seabirds
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	*Red-listed species*: marbled murrelet. *Blue-listed species*: Cassin's auklet; great blue heron; red-necked phalarope; peregrine falcon; sei whale; Gmelin's sedge.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Breeding seabirds

Recreation

Representation		
backcountry	☐	Not Applicable
destination	☐	Not Applicable
travel corridor	☐	Not Applicable
local recreation	☐	Not Applicable
Special Opportunities	☐	Not Applicable
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Breeding seabirds – offsite

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☐	Values unknown
Special Features	☐	Possible house sites

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☒	Important Bird Area (International program that identifies and supports the protection of lands having special bird habitats)

Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of protected areas focused on seabird breeding areas on the west coast of British Columbia
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☐	Not Applicable
Partnerships	☐	Possible partnership with DFO
Vulnerability	☒	Susceptible to oil spills, rat infestations; vulnerable to commercial fishing pressures
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	Marine addition to area proposed as part of the Central Coast LRMP. Area of interest to Parks Canada as representative of Queen Charlotte Sound Marine Region. Part of the Marine Protected Areas Strategy.

Area: 660 hectares (125 ha upland; 535 ha foreshore)

Date of establishment: June 23, 1988